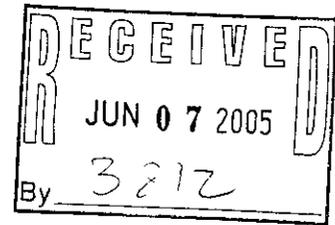


# OLD MISSION BANK



May 26, 2005

Robert E. Feldman, Executive Secretary  
Attention: Comments RIN 3064-AC89  
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation  
550 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20429

Re: Community Reinvestment Act Regulations

Dear Sir or Madame:

As the Sr. Vice President/CFO of a 5-year old De Novo community bank of \$74 million in total asset size, I strongly support any steps that will ease the regulatory burden that I must confront every day and that unnecessarily use up my officers and staff's time and energy that should be devoted to serving our customers and communities. The agencies' CRA proposal to increase the threshold for the streamlined CRA exam to \$1 billion is a step in the right direction, not only for my bank but also for many of my larger small town matured counterparts.

With the changes our industry has undergone in the last 25 years, especially the mergers and the appearance of huge banks that operate nationwide, it is time to adjust the CRA rule and set a significant, yet lower benchmark for tiered examinations. Simply applying the current streamlined CRA exam to banks with up to \$1 billion in assets would reduce the regulatory burden. However, adding a separate review for community development activities for intermediate banks (between \$250 million and \$1 billion) is an acceptable compromise.

It also would be less burdensome and simpler if the agencies added a community development factor to the existing CRA streamlined review that acknowledges the fact Community Banks are community involved. As the survival of community banks is intertwined with the health of the local economy, a separate community development test will still examine community banks for community reinvestment activities they undertake with or without CRA. We are involved because it's our community.

The proposed review of a combination of community development lending, investments, and services under a community development test will be much more flexible than the existing separate and overly restrictive large bank tests. This flexibility will allow all community banks regardless of size across the country to serve their markets in the most appropriate way, given their own strengths and the needs of their communities. However, for burden reduction to be realized, examiners must understand how to apply this flexibility.

Expanding the definition of community development to include activities that benefit rural communities is extremely important. Unlike metropolitan areas, rural areas, such as our Eastern Upper Peninsula, often are not neatly divided into low- or moderate- income areas. Allowing CRA credit for efforts that benefit the local community, such as schools and local infrastructure, will let community banks like Old Mission Bank support pressing local needs, and receive credit for it, rather than make investments that benefit an area on the other side of the state, as is often the case under the current rules. Any definition of "rural," however, must be broad enough and easily applied to be workable.

Finally, I support expanding the definition of community development to include activities that benefit areas designated as disaster areas. It should be a simple matter for the bank to determine if an area is qualified, such as designation by a government authority. As disaster areas have special redevelopment needs, it is fitting that activities benefiting these areas qualify under CRA.

Regulatory burden disproportionately impacts community banks. Many are merging or selling under the pressures presented by regulatory burden. Without regulatory relief, many communities will lose their local institutions, to the detriment of the entire community. We need your help and commitment to maintain a strong community banking environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "C. Chenoweth".

Catherine E. Chenoweth  
Sr. Vice President/CFO

~Main Office~

2701 I-75 BUSINESS SPUR • SAULT STE. MARIE, MI 49783  
PHONE (906) 635-9910 • FAX (906) 635-9920

~PICKFORD BRANCH~

25685 S. M-129 • PICKFORD, MI 49774  
PHONE (906) 647-9910 • FAX (906) 647-9914

www.oldmissionbank.com